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CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE QUESTIONS OF: TORTURE AND DETENTION

Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 January 2002]

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*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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1- During the year 2001, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) has received many reports regarding the situation of prisons and prisoners in the world. In this statement, we would like to draw the attention of the Commission on Human Rights to the following points

2- In Turkey, during the year 2001, most of the reported cases refer to the situation of prisons, the poor medical care in the prisons or holding many prisoners in a small cell or dormitories. The European Commission also in its regular report refers to torture and ill-treatment in police custody. According to this report there are some documents and evidence that show positive steps in improving laws in Turkey. However, some other cases show that the Turkish government does not have a good record regarding its actions. There are many violations of laws in Turkey, such as the existence of solitary confinements. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) expresses its serious concern of Turkish prisoners' conditions in accordance to Article 10 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and requests the Turkish government to take the necessary steps for improvement of the living conditions of inmates and the structures of the prisons, and guarantee the legal protection of prisoners.

3- Regarding the prison conditions in the United States, prisons remained overcrowded. Twenty-two states and the Federal prison system operated at 100 percent or full capacity. Overcrowding contributed to the growth of private prisons: according to the Department of Justice privately-operated facilities held 5.5 percent of all state prisoners and 2.5 percent of federal prisoners. Over 20,000 prisoners were confined in special super-maximum security facilities. They typically spent all their waking and sleeping hours locked alone or with a cellmate in small, sometimes windowless cells. A fourteen-month long Department of Justice investigation of conditions oat Nassau County Jail resulted in a scathing report released in September. The report said the jail had an "institutional culture that supports and promotes abuses". The documented abuses included brutal beatings by officers and officers paying inmates to beat other inmates, especially targeting sex offenders.

4- According to an Amnesty International report about prison conditions in Italy, tension was high in prisons and detention centres for aliens with frequent and widespread protest prompted largely by unsatisfactory conditions, in some instances amounting to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Severe overcrowding persisted, together with reports of inadequate medical assistance, poor sanitation and other connected problems, including high rates of suicide, attempted suicide and self-inflicted injuries.

5- Also, in Greece, there were further allegations of ill treatment by law enforcement officials. Many reports involved beatings by police officers at the time of arrest. There were also reports of ill treatment of asylum seekers during forced deportation. Despite repeated appeals, the authorities failed to investigate adequately allegations of ill treatment of Roma by police or bring those responsible to justice. It seems that impunity for past human rights violations has remained a concern.